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# **The Social Origins of Japanese Nuclear Power: A Gramscian Analysis**

**Dominic Kelly**

## **Abstract**

In this paper I seek to contribute to the post-Fukushima literature on Japan, much of which accepts uncritically the orthodox narrative locating Japan's nuclear origins in the politics of the Cold War and in the passivity of Japanese civil society vis-à-vis a 'strong' state. In contrast, I draw upon Gramsci's work in order to locate these origins within wider processes of global structural transformation associated with the shift from feudalism to capitalism, and the attendant imperialism of the nineteenth century. I treat Japan's Meiji Restoration as an instance of passive revolution within this context, one outcome of which was the adoption of a specific form of state (the 'developmental state') and a specific form of nationalism (techno-nationalism). I further argue that the US Occupation of Japan (1945-52) can be viewed as another instance of passive revolution. In both cases I examine the economic, political and social channels through which state goals were communicated to the Japanese populace and either embraced or resisted in turn. I suggest that Japan's techno-nationalism survived into the post-war era, but was stripped of its overt military trappings and portrayed instead as a unique combination of 'pacifism' and 'economic developmentalism'. In this way, despite being victims of nuclear weapons, ordinary Japanese people were persuaded to embrace nuclear power.

Key Words: Gramsci, Japan, United States, Fukushima, Meiji Restoration, techno-nationalism, passive revolution, integral state, civil society, nuclear power

## **Introduction**

The tragic events of 11 March 2011 in the Tohoku region of Japan have lent momentum to a long-standing yet thus far fruitless campaign to rid the country of its reliance on nuclear power. In this paper, rather than focussing in detail on the contemporary scene I examine the historical roots of Japanese techno-nationalism and the social struggle over the introduction of nuclear power to Japan that took place in the early postwar period. My reasoning for this is straightforward. First, despite the passage of time, analysis of that earlier struggle may help us understand more clearly the character of the contemporary debate and the positions and strengths of its major combatants. Second, I contend that the deep roots of Japanese nuclear power lie not in the post-war period - upon which most of the existing literature is focussed - but in the nineteenth century. Third, much of the contemporary work seeking to explain the

impact of the triple disaster - the combined earthquake, tsunami and radiation leak - centred upon Fukushima offers a stylised, almost 'ideal-type' portrayal of the relationship between state and civil society. In my view, this limits as much as it extends our understanding of the contemporary situation in Japan. More broadly, fourth, such an analysis affords an opportunity to discuss the theories, concepts and methods appropriate to the study of contemporary political science and international relations.

The argument unfolds in three steps. In the first section I offer a survey of the existing (English language) literature on the development of nuclear power, and link this to the predominant conceptualisation of the relationship between 'state' and 'civil society' in Japan. In the second and third sections, I first introduce an alternative conceptualisation of the relationship between state and civil society derived from the work of the political activist and scholar Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), before using this in the development of a narrative account of techno-nationalism leading to the introduction of nuclear power to Japan.

### **State, Civil Society & Nuclear Power**

Relatively little has been written in English about the decision to introduce nuclear power to Japan. The major text on the development of energy markets, Richard Samuels' *The Business of the Japanese State* (1987), contains less than twenty pages on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Samuels bases his argument on a rather restrictive notion of what constitutes the 'politics of reciprocal consent': focussing almost exclusively on the tight relationship forged between the Japanese state (represented chiefly as the bureaucracy, supported by a supine government - the Liberal Democratic Party) and private business interests (the power generation companies). In his depiction, there is little or no role for an active civil society in the politics of energy provision.

In the case of nuclear power, Samuels has been criticised for over-emphasising the conflictual side of the relationship between the Japanese state, as he conceives it, and private business interests. In contrast, and with a focus on the post-Chernobyl (1986) period, Dauvergne (1993) argues that for the most part the government was content to play a jurisdictional role (setting state subsidies for power generation, providing economic guarantees and safety nets) whilst allowing private business to exercise authority over the development process and day-to-day running of the industry. Dauvergne further argues that Samuel's underplays the role of 'outside forces' in the unfolding development of the nuclear power generation industry. By 'outside forces' Dauvergne is referring to civil society: sections of the media outside the government-influenced 'reporters clubs' and other concerned Japanese citizens protesting locally and on a regional and national basis.<sup>2</sup> Despite his assessment that civil society has been more important since the mid-1990s, Dauvergne echoes Samuels' formal demarcation between state ('inside') and civil society ('outside'). This division appears again in Aldrich's work on the siting of controversial facilities such as nuclear power plants in Japan<sup>3</sup>.

Since '3.11' (as the triple disaster has become known in Japan), a body of work has emerged seeking to explain both its immediate impact on and long-term consequences for Japanese society. Most of the arguments advanced in this literature continue to echo Samuels, Dauvergne and Aldrich in their acceptance of a separation between the state (elite bureaucrats, conservative politicians, big business) and civil society.<sup>4</sup> Kawato et al (2012, 78), typify acceptance of this separation when they 'understand civil society to be the organized non-state, non-market sector that exists above the family and individual'. This definition and those like it are products of liberal thinking where 'civil society' describes a space beyond the control of the state carved out by organised groups of citizens anxious to both monitor and limit the exercise of state authority.<sup>5</sup> Conceptualising the relationship

between 'state' and 'civil society' in this way is the norm amongst scholars of Japanese society (Schwartz and Pharr 2003; Pekkanen 2006; Avenell 2010; Hasegawa 2014), as is the view that civil society has been 'weak' in Japan relative to the bureaucracy and big business.<sup>6</sup>

Discussions of the 'nuclear village' - defined by Kingston (2013, 201) as 'pro-nuclear advocates, including utilities, bureaucrats, politicians, journalists, and experts' - tend to be less explicit in their claims but suggest, nevertheless, that there is a border or separation between policy makers and policy takers on nuclear and (by extension) other issues.<sup>7</sup> As separate entities, the interests of these groups are most often seen to 'clash' at the intersection of pro- and anti-nuclear policies. The broad outcome of this clash of interests has been victory for the 'nuclear village' over the concerned citizen, although since the 1970s it has become more difficult for the former to triumph in individual struggles over siting issues in particular (Broadbent 1998; Lesbirel 1998; Aldrich 2008).

One theme evident in the post-Fukushima literature is cautious optimism that the power of the nuclear village will wane and that of civil society wax as Japan considers a non-nuclear future.<sup>8</sup> This optimism is based upon a number of factors. The first factor is the upsurge in anti-nuclear activism and sentiment seen in Japan since the disaster. This upsurge is closely linked to questions of legitimacy and democratisation since it includes a reaction to both the woefully slow and inadequate government response to the explosion and radiation leak at the Fukushima plant, and to the efforts of the private company concerned - Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) - to obscure its culpability in the matter. The second factor is the groundswell of support for the people of the Tohoku region emerging from all over Japan, and in particular to the phenomenon of volunteerism which has seen many thousands of people travelling to the region to offer assistance. This second factor is also tied into wider currents in Japanese society given that the volunteerism sparked by the triple disaster - and the organisational structures in place through which it is channelled - appears

much more robust because of lessons learned from the earlier experience of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that struck the Kobe-Osaka region in 1995. That experience, and the alteration to the Civil Code through the Law for the Promotion of Specified Non-Profit Activities (commonly known as the NPO Law) that followed in 1998, are seen as marking a 'watershed' (Schwartz 2003, 14-19) in the evolution of civil society in Japan.<sup>9</sup> In essence, those hoping for a re-balancing of the relationship between state, big business and civil society in Japan see in the ongoing response to the triple disaster a light at the end of the tunnel. Increased civic engagement, if it can be sustained, is seen as an important milestone on the road to Japan becoming not only nuclear-free but also a fully-fledged and mature democracy.

I am less optimistic. Notwithstanding the potential significance of both the upsurge in anti-nuclear sentiment and the growth of civic activism since the triple disaster, the power of the 'nuclear village' is deeply entrenched within Japanese society and will be extremely difficult to uproot (Oguma 2016). Indeed, a neo-nationalist backlash took place very soon after the triple disaster, as exemplified by the election and subsequent actions of Abe Shinzo as Prime Minister (Kingston 2016). This backlash sits within a wider context of a shift to the political right in Japan over the past several decades (Nakano 2016), and one of its outcomes has been the abandonment of the 'zero option' for nuclear power touted soon after the triple disaster, and its replacement by official support for maintaining nuclear power as a significant (20-22%) part of Japan's energy mix over the long term (METI 2015, 8).

My assessment results not from the understanding that an 'outside' force (civil society) lacks the strength to dislodge an 'inside' force (the state / nuclear village). Rather, my view is that it is not possible to separate these two 'forces' at all since they are co-constituted. I therefore agree with Joseph Buttigieg's (2005, 36-7) argument, derived from a Gramscian understanding of the nature of civil society, that 'the conflating of civil society ... with

popular oppositional movements results in an oversimplification of the immensely intricate, interdependent relations between society (or "the people") and government (or the state), and in a reductive understanding of the myriad connections and divergences among the various elements that constitute civil society.'<sup>10</sup> This oversimplification, he goes on to suggest, 'gives rise to politically debilitating misdiagnoses of the operations of power and of the resilience of the very forces one presumably wants to combat.'

In this paper, I want to avoid a 'reductive understanding' of civil society by emphasising three elements that are sometimes (although rarely simultaneously) considered but usually underplayed in other work on Japanese civil society and the evolution of the Japanese nuclear power industry.<sup>11</sup> These three elements are: firstly, the internal relations of Japanese civil society and the Japanese state; secondly, the place and role of nuclear power in Japanese techno-nationalism; and thirdly, the dual role of nuclear power. Inclusion of the first element avoids the mistake of reifying arbitrary boundaries between nominally separate social groups. Insertion of the second element builds on material and institutional conceptualisations of power relationships. Addition of the third element both enables an analysis of the key role played in the introduction of nuclear power to Japan by its former conqueror and chief ally, the US, and extends the empirical account into the politics of Cold War rearmament.<sup>12</sup>

I consider these three elements within the broad frame provided by an historical account examining, firstly, the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Japan and, secondly, the politics of the early postwar period (1945-1960). With a particular emphasis on the co-constitution of and symbiotic relationship between state and civil society, this account maps out the configuration of social forces that fostered the creation of a "collective will" in Japanese society towards the adoption of nuclear power around and through a narrative of techno-nationalism. Samuels (1994, x) defines techno-nationalism as 'the belief that

technology is a fundamental element in national security, that it must be indigenized, diffused, and nurtured in order to make a nation rich and strong'. In contrast, and with his gaze firmly fixed on the postwar period, Low (2003, 197) defines techno-nationalism as 'a common commitment to economic growth fuelled by science and technology'.<sup>13</sup>

On a foundation provided by the historical materialism of Antonio Gramsci, I suggest that techno-nationalism found expression first in Japanese nationalism and imperialism (1894-1945) before being consciously repackaged in the postwar era as the pursuit of economic growth and pacifism. I argue that the successful repackaging of techno-nationalism played a major role in overcoming hostility towards nuclear power in Japanese society: enabling the establishment of a nuclear industry in the early 1950s in addition to the signing of the revised US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. This explanation runs counter to the standard line in the literature suggesting that it was possible to introduce nuclear power into Japan because civil society was 'weak' relative to the state. On the contrary, it became possible to develop a nuclear industry in Japan only after a prolonged struggle for hegemony conducted upon the terrain of civil society: a struggle won in part through reference to the narrative of techno-nationalism laid down from the Meiji era onwards. The majority of the paper is given over to the case study. In the next section, however, I establish what I think are the merits of a Gramscian analysis in this case.

### **Gramsci's Historical Materialism**

As part of his analysis of the unification of Italy in 1870 and the rise of fascism in that country in the 1920s, Gramsci reflected on the deployment of ideology - 'the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle' (Gramsci: 1971, 377) - as a means through which political and economic structures and processes could be organised and controlled. In so doing, and in common with other Western Marxists, he tried to understand



more fully the relationship between the *forces* of production (the base) and the *relations* of production (the superstructure).<sup>14</sup>

Gramsci's work as a journalist and cultural critic, as well as his (unfinished) university education in linguistics, undoubtedly fed this determination to focus on the relations of production in civil society: the realm of ideas, of the arts, culture, myth and religion.<sup>15</sup> His focus is also the result, however, of a diagnosis regarding the failure of the revolution to appear in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe, as anticipated by classical and orthodox Marxists, and its appearance instead in relatively 'backward' Russia. Based primarily upon his own direct observations of currents within Italian society (conditions within the agrarian South of Italy contrasted with those in the industrialising North; the rise of fascism) and on the experience gained whilst attempting to create and steer the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Gramsci's diagnosis (1971: 229-39) was the following. Social revolution took place in Russia rather than in the advanced capitalist countries of the West because the former lacked an essential ingredient possessed by the latter: a 'powerful system of fortresses and earthworks' (that is, a robust civil society) upon and behind which, in his view, state power ultimately rests. In such circumstances, a 'war of movement' (direct confrontation) would not succeed in bringing about revolutionary change in the west.

This diagnosis prompted Gramsci to seek a means through which the grip of the northern industrialists and southern landowners on Italy might be broken, and a communist society established. According to him, the mechanism through which that task might be achieved was the revolutionary party: an organisation he saw as a modern equivalent of Machiavelli's 'Prince'.<sup>16</sup> Through a painstaking process of political education, Gramsci envisaged the creation of a mass movement and its mobilisation towards revolutionary change. The movement was to be rooted both in the industrial working class of northern Italy (beginning in Turin with the factory council movement) and in the agrarian poor of southern

Italy, led and directed by the PCI. This process he called a 'war of position': political struggle aimed at identifying, understanding and overcoming the structures and organisations (mental and physical) conferring privilege and power on the Italian ruling class. In contrast to the 'war of movement', the war of position was an exercise in the production of consent to rule and was to be conducted not directly against the state but in and through civil society. The 'system of fortresses and earthworks' was not to be battered down from outside, but was to be dismantled and rebuilt from within.

Civil society was thus central to Gramsci's thought and praxis (Buci-Glucksmann 1980). In contrast to the liberal conception dominant in scholarship on Japan, civil society and political society (the formal machinery of the state) are *inseparable*, and are distinguished by Gramsci only for heuristic purposes.<sup>17</sup> The dialectical unity of the moments of civil society and political society is captured in the concept of the 'integral state': perhaps 'Gramsci's novel contribution to Marxist political theory' (Thomas 2009, 137). The hegemony of one social class over all others is guaranteed by its monopolisation of legitimate violence (that is, control of the machinery of state) but secured through struggle on the terrain of civil society. In Gramsci's (1971, 57-8) own words, 'the state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules'.

History tells us that the efforts of Gramsci and those others with whom he collaborated were in vain. Italian fascism was defeated not from within but from without, and through a 'war of movement' that established not a communist society but an approximation of a liberal democratic society. By then, Gramsci himself was dead, many of his collaborators were either in prison or had fled, and the movement itself had been largely co-opted by fascism.

Despite Gramsci's political failure, his intellectual legacy remains. It is my contention that this legacy can help us understand more fully the remarkable decision taken by the Japanese government to adopt and develop nuclear power in their earthquake and tidal wave prone country only a few years after having been attacked to devastating effect by this same technology in its original, weaponised form. It can also, therefore, help us to appreciate more fully the constraints and opportunities faced by those in Japan (and elsewhere) struggling to rid their society of this controversial and dangerous technology.

The attraction of Gramsci's work lies broadly in its commitment to and further development of historical materialism, and in the conceptual armamentarium Gramsci developed for that purpose. In this specific case, its appeal lies in the contrast between the standard liberal-democratic interpretations of state and civil society (as *separate* entities with both shared and competing interests) underpinning contemporary analyses of the debate over the future of nuclear power in Japan, and Gramsci's understanding that state and civil society are not *things* in and of themselves but historically rooted, mutually constituted, ever-changing *relationships* of power. Charting historically the evolution of these relationships of power facilitates an analysis that avoids what Buttigieg (2005, 36-7) calls 'politically debilitating misdiagnoses of the operations of power and of the resilience of the very forces one presumably wants to combat.' In short, Gramsci's work can help us identify and understand the mental and physical structures and institutions conferring power and privilege on the Japanese ruling class.

### **Imperialism, Techno-Nationalism and the Integral State**

According to Okimoto (1989, 21-2), one of the key forces shaping Japanese industrial policy between the mid-nineteenth century and the late 1970s was the desire 'to industrialize as fast as possible in order to catch up with and overtake the leading powers of the West'. Similarly,

Curtis (1999, 39) identifies a 'pervasive public consensus in support of policies to achieve the catch-up-with-the-West goal' as one of four 'crucial pillars' supporting the 1955 system in Japan.<sup>18</sup> It is this policy of industrial catch-up, and the manner in which its necessity was inculcated within the hearts and minds of ordinary Japanese people, that we must first explain if we are to understand more fully the decision to adopt nuclear power taken in the 1950s.

In the mid-nineteenth century Japan was a semi-feudal society divided into roughly 250 semi-autonomous fiefs under the dominion of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Tokugawa ruled in the name of the emperor who was himself, according to Japan's creation myth, a descendant of the gods and their representative on earth. Japanese society was, in short, a caste-based hierarchy ordered vertically by myth and tradition and horizontally by political expediency. The Tokugawa had consolidated their power, from 1603, through de-centralised control over the lesser fiefs, isolation from the outside world, and ossification of the caste system (*samurai*, peasants, artisans, merchants). Drawing upon Confucian roots, the ideology of the status system demanded individual service and subordination to the collective (Hall 1974). Japan became a 'family-nation', and the emperor its politically impotent father figure (Gluck 1985).

Ultimately, however, the Tokugawa could not stifle the emergence of socio-economic forces that would lead to calls for change from the leaders of rival fiefs and from youthful elements of the ruling *samurai* caste (Hanley and Yamamura, 1977). 'Outside' fiefs, located far from Tokyo, the seat of Tokugawa power, were sensitive to developments on the Asian mainland and the wider world. They perceived the growing power and technological sophistication of the western powers, and grew fearful for Japan as China was first defeated in the Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1857-60) and then divided into spheres of influence through the imposition of what became known as the 'unequal treaties' (Auslin 2006). These fiefs

covertly imported modern weapons and technology, and also developed indigenous technology and methods of production (Hacker 1977; Totman 1980; Morris-Suzuki 1994).

Over many years, economic power in Japan had slipped away from the *samurai* and fallen instead into the hands of an emergent merchant class (Sheldon 1958). This led to the impoverishment of many low-ranking *samurai*, the further immiseration of large sections of the peasantry, and the rise of resentment and protest in Tokugawa society (Borton 1968; Bix 1986; Vlastos 1995). Particularly significant was the resentment felt by many younger - underemployed and impoverished yet well-educated - *samurai* who could not hope to advance far within their existing clan hierarchies (Smith, 1961; Hirschmeier 1964). It was from amongst the ranks of these 'men of talent' that calls for change emerged first and loudest. Some of these men would go on to lead Japan following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Silbermann 1993).

The arrival of Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' in 1853 signalled the beginning of the end of Tokugawa rule (Walworth, 1966). Hopelessly outmatched by western technology and power, Japan had signed treaties of 'amity and commerce' with the Americans, British, Russians, Prussians, Dutch and French by 1861. By 1868 the Tokugawa had been overthrown and the Emperor Meiji (a youth aged 16 years) restored - in name at least - to his position as head of state (Beasley 1973, 1990). Within a relatively few years the formal caste system had been abolished, the feudal landholding system swept aside, a comprehensive land survey conducted, a land tax instituted, a system of compulsory education instated, and a conscript army raised. A modern machinery of government emerged in fits and starts, and a Constitution was gifted to his subjects by the emperor in February 1889. In sum, roughly thirty years after the Meiji Restoration the institutional and regulatory foundations of a modern state had been laid down (Silberman 1993).

The exhilarating pace and thoroughgoing nature of the Meiji Restoration has been captured many times in both the academic literature and wider media. What also comes through in the literature, however, is the notion that the 'restoration' of imperial rule was an elite-driven process featuring little input from ordinary Japanese people. To cite just three examples here, Hobsbawm (1975, 151) suggests that 'the initiative, the direction and the cadres of the "revolution from above" came from sections of the feudalists themselves.' Stockwin (1999, 15) argues that the Meiji Restoration 'was a revolution carried out by dissident elements of the old ruling class: a revolution from above, not below'. Similarly, Gordon (2014, 61-75) frames the process as a '*samurai* revolution' conducted on elite *samurai* terms and in elite *samurai* interests - with the latter portrayed as synonymous with the 'national' interest. Gramsci (1971, 59) encapsulates such moments of "revolution" without a "revolution" through his concept of 'passive revolution': indicating, in this case, a political strategy through which a small group of individuals institute incremental yet far reaching change in society (Gramsci 1971, 106-20; Showstack Sassoon 1982; Allinson and Anievas 2010; Morton 2010).

A particular interpretation of this elite-driven explanation underpins the liberal argument that civil society (understood, as noted earlier, as 'the organized non-state, non-market sector that exists above the family and individual') in Japan has been weak and underdeveloped throughout the modern era. In the liberal view, aside from a temporary flourishing during the time of 'Taisho democracy' (roughly, 1918-31), and again in the early post-war period (1945-60), elites have for the most part managed to restrain civil society through a variety of administrative, coercive and co-optive means. The suggestion is that civil society in Japan is too 'small', that it operates at too local a level, and therefore lacks national coherence and direction. In Japan, it is 'hard for autonomous groups to become large, and hard for large groups to be autonomous' (Pekkanen: 2003, 133). In this reading, Japanese

civil society is ill-equipped to perform adequately its primary function: monitoring the state and holding it to account through the exercise of public opinion and use of the ballot box.

Nevertheless, according to the standard narrative, from the 1970s onwards, beginning with protests over the environmental destruction being wrought upon the archipelago by rapid industrialisation (Broadbent 1998; Walker 2010), civil society began to stir. From this platform, civil society was kept energised by a series of public failures and scandals (including political and bureaucratic corruption; economic mismanagement; and issues of environmental and public health) through the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Popular disgust with the government's response to the Kobe-Osaka earthquake and, latterly, the events of '3.11', appears to be fuelling the liberal hope that the dam behind which the pent-up energies of Japanese civil society have been contained for so long is beginning to crumble.

I suggest an interpretation at odds with the liberal norm. Understood in Gramscian terms as a passive revolution, the Meiji Restoration (and, as we shall see, the US Occupation of Japan) was indeed an elite-driven process, but those elites secured their hegemony by working extremely hard to mould (Garon 1997) the energies of a robust, vibrant and politically engaged civil society. Many Japanese people were eager to realise the possibility afforded by the transition from Tokugawa to Meiji of the further democratisation of society, whilst cognisant of the limitations on public action imposed by existing social structures.<sup>20</sup> Thus, 'public actors remonstrated with bad officials without rejecting officialdom' and 'they reconceived authority in accord with the still-elitist principle of expert performance' (Berry: 1998, 156). In short, 'actors in Japan's public sphere presumed a vital membership in the polity without presuming control over it' (Berry: 1998, 139). The lines of force ran both ways, nevertheless, as 'many of the new social forces entered into rather intimate relations with the state' (Garon 2003: 56).

Recall that for Gramsci state and civil society are, in concrete terms, inseparable. Thus, there is no 'dam' behind which pent-up energies are contained. Rather, the Meiji state actively *channeled* the energies of Japanese subjects in directions suited to its needs. The two primary channels were economic modernisation and imperialism. These channels were forged partly through ideological clarion calls to 'revere the emperor, expel the barbarians' heard following the signing of the unequal treaties, and to pursue 'civilisation and enlightenment' in order to build Japan into a 'rich nation, strong army' issued during the Meiji era.<sup>21</sup> The river into which these channels jointly spilled was techno-nationalism: manifest at the time through the pursuit of rapid industrialisation underpinned by social control and scientific and technological advancement (Gao 1997; Low 2005).

The concept of hegemony is crucial to understanding how Gramsci envisaged the shifting nature and character of relations between state and civil society. In his own (1971: 80) words, 'the "normal" exercise of hegemony ... is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent.' In other words, hegemony involves the use of both coercion and persuasion in the interests of the ruling class, but with the emphasis on the latter where possible (see, amongst others, Mouffe 1979). These interests are 'naturalised' in the minds of members of subordinate classes via an appropriate ideology (in this case, techno-nationalism), while dissent is smothered through compromise or force. The pursuit of hegemony involves the struggle for control over the machinery of the state; a struggle that begins in civil society. It is, however, an unending struggle: hegemony is never 'complete' but is always contested and challenged and therefore must be perpetually defended and reinforced.

In shaping the socio-political and economic transformation of Japan during the Meiji era, elite *samurai* already controlled the machinery of state power. This is why the Meiji



Restoration can be characterised in Gramscian terms as an instance of passive revolution. In the context of western imperialism, the task before the Meiji leadership was to restructure the machinery of the state to suit their purposes whilst at the same time producing Japanese subjects supportive of their goals. As Mouffe (1979, 182) puts it: the 'objective of ideological struggle is not to reject the system and all its elements but to rearticulate it, to break it down to its constituent elements and then to sift through past conceptions to see which ones, with some changes of content, can serve to express the new situation.'

Upon a foundation provided by a national taxation system, the government developed a specific set of institutions and constructed and framed the interests of Japanese subjects through ideological appeals grounded in techno-nationalism. The search for the resources and markets needed to sustain techno-nationalism, as well as a desire both to compete against and secure recognition from the western imperial powers led ineluctably to imperialism (Iriye 1989). The state:

sought to bind the "public" to itself along with the authority to define the identity and values of its subjects. The centripetal force of this identification was most evident amongst bureaucrats, where personal, official, and national identity were intertwined with a powerful sense of mission - to civilize the people, to acquire learning for the sake of the nation, to raise Japan's status in the world (Barshay: 2003b, 8).

The key move was both to elevate the emperor to the pinnacle of Japanese society, and to isolate him from the vicissitudes of day-to-day politics (Titus 1974). This was achieved in a number of ways, the most important of which was the promulgation of the Constitution of 1889: Article 3 of which reads 'The Emperor is sacred and inviolable'. Articles 1-16 deal with all aspects of the emperor's role, empowering him with authority over the newly constituted Imperial Diet and over the bureaucracy, and granting him supreme

command over the army and navy. The Constitution also granted an unelected Privy Council authority to 'deliberate on important matters of State' (Article 56) and to advise the emperor accordingly at his discretion. A House of Peers was created, and was composed of members of the imperial family, of the nobility, and of others nominated by the emperor. This House of Peers counter-balanced the power of the elected House of Representatives.<sup>22</sup> A separate section of the Constitution established the rights and obligations of Japanese subjects - with some 'rights' constrained 'within limits not prejudicial to peace and order' (Article 28 on freedom of religious belief) and 'within the limits of the law' (Article 29 on freedom of speech and association).<sup>23</sup>

As Gordon (2014, 83) notes, the Constitution, while in part a response to very real pressure from large sections of Japanese society for democratisation, was for the most part a tool of social control. The 'Meiji leaders were not simply caving in to the opposition. They had already decided that constitutional government was needed to secure international respect for Japan and to mobilize the energies of the people behind projects to build a "rich nation and strong army"'. The document 'was written and presented in a way that sought to maximize the power of the state and minimize that of the people' (Gordon: 2014, 91). Through the mechanism of the Constitution, control over the country remained firmly in the hands of a (former) *samurai* elite and their allied landlords, merchants, industrialists and financiers in both the cities and the countryside.

State power was also entrenched within and extended by the bureaucratic structure.<sup>24</sup> The Home Ministry set about streamlining the local government system through forced consolidation of hamlets into a far smaller number of villages; and did the same to Shinto shrines. With smaller numbers, it was believed, would come greater central control. By 1871 Shinto shrines had been formally designated 'government institutions for the observance of "national rites"' (Gordon: 2014, 108). The Home Ministry also either directly created or

indirectly encouraged the development of a large number of associations and societies, including the Ladies' Patriotic Association in 1901 and the Local Improvement Campaign in 1908 (Pyle 1973; see also Garon 1993, 1997 and 2003). Under the leadership of Mori Arinori, moreover, the Ministry of Education continued a trend begun in the 1870s to use the education system as a tool of social control. The Ministry introduced military-style teacher training and exerted greater editorial control over the content of school textbooks: so that both inculcated within the classroom Confucian ideals of obedience, filial piety and loyalty to the state. In 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education, which in later years 'took on a sacred aura of remarkable power' (Gordon: 2014, 104), formally reinforced these objectives: urging Japanese subjects to '... advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the law; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the state' (cited in Beasley: 1990, 96; and Gordon: 2014, 104).

Finally, military conscription was started in January 1873. From the age of twenty, men were to serve for a period of three years, followed by four years in the military reserve. As with the education system, conscription served a dual purpose. On one hand it was a means towards a modern, standing army. On the other it served to expose conscripts to nationalist ideas that would return with them to their villages and homes. This latter purpose was further advanced by the creation in 1910 of the Imperial Military Reserve Association, an organisation that had branches in almost every village in the country by 1918 (Smethurst 1974; Gordon: 2014, 135).

The results of Japan's rapid transformation during the Meiji era are well known, and I will therefore only briefly touch on them here. In short, then, Japan's leaders got what they wanted: a highly ordered, economically productive society, and western recognition as a modern, centralised, economically dynamic and, above all, militarily powerful state able to compete with the imperial powers on a roughly equal basis. Unfortunately, Japan's leaders

were also on the receiving end of two things they certainly did not want: an economic crisis, and a related political crisis.<sup>25</sup>

The global economic crisis that followed the Wall Street crash in 1929 impacted heavily upon the Japanese economy. Unemployment skyrocketed as thousands of small and medium sized enterprises went to the wall. Land disputes between tenant farmers and their landlords also increased exponentially as the latter sought direct control over their assets, and the ability to offer work to unemployed relatives returning from the cities. Meanwhile, cynical manipulation of the currency markets by the *zaibatsu* banks led to protests decrying the perceived self-serving cronyism of big capital and the established political parties. Throughout the 1920s it seemed, farmers, shopkeepers, factory workers and students were protesting at one time or another, and often at the same time. In addition, in what Gordon (2014, 166) calls 'government by assassination', a wave of politically motivated murders swept the land coming to a peak in the 1930s. Coupled with increasingly aggressive moves undertaken independently by the army in Japan's colonies, fear of social disorder, possibly ending in a communist-inspired revolution, resulted in a steady increase in authoritarian measures taken by the state, and in a concomitant narrowing of civil liberties. Meanwhile, public confidence in political parties, and in the Diet itself, ebbed away, leaving the bureaucracy and the military to engage increasingly in inter- and intra-factional struggles over the reins of state power (Storry 1957).

In addition to the sense of crisis emerging from socio-economic upheaval, Japan's leaders also discerned a weakening of their strategic position - particularly in Manchuria - as a consequence of a resurgence of Chinese nationalism under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek and a strengthened Soviet military presence in the Far East. Meanwhile, Japan's larger imperial ambitions appeared threatened by British and American determination to limit the size of the Japanese navy relative to their own. These developments at home and abroad

occasioned efforts to bring the economy, the polity, and Japanese society under more centralised control (Berger 1989). Increasingly isolated, Japan moved inexorably into the 'dark valley' of ultra-nationalism and the Pacific War. With a great deal of popular support, the military slowly took control: expanding its reach still further into the economy and society in order to finance and deliver expansion abroad.

### **Techno-Nationalism and Nuclear Power**

The atomic bombing of Japan, on 6 and 9 August, 1945, ended Japan's imperial ambitions. Japan was formally occupied by the United States until 1952 (1972 in Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands), and its pre-war economy and institutions subjected to a process of de-concentration and democratisation (Fukui 1989; Dower 1993 and 1999; Gordon 2014). Most importantly, the new Constitution preserved the emperor as the symbolic head of state and in so doing ensured a degree of real and cognitive continuity with the past. Nevertheless, sovereignty now resided in the Japanese people, and the cabinet answered to the Diet rather than to the emperor. Human rights, civil rights and the autonomy of the judiciary were protected in law. The now infamous 'peace clause' (Article 9 of the Constitution) required Japan to renounce both war and the maintenance of a military in perpetuity. The emancipation of women, land reform, and the reform of industrial relations went hand in hand with the Tokyo War Crimes trials, a purge of 'ultra-nationalists' (impacting most heavily upon the military and conservative politicians), bureaucratic reform, reform of the police and local bureaucracy, and the forced breakup of the *zaibatsu* combines.

The vicissitudes of the Cold War softened American attitudes toward the twin objectives of the Occupation. In place of de-concentration and democratisation, economic rehabilitation and political stabilisation came into focus. This provided the opportunity for 'enduring features of political and economic life' (Gordon: 2014, 241) in pre-war Japan to

survive in fresh yet familiar guises. These enduring features were the *zaibatsu* / *keiretsu*, conservative politicians and their political parties, and the civilian bureaucracy. With the formation of the Liberal Democratic Party under the leadership of Kishi Nobusuke (a highly corrupt, deeply reactionary individual who had played a key role in administering Japanese imperialism), the last pillar of the '1955 system' identified by Curtis (1999, 39) was cemented in place.

Meanwhile, following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 Japan was effectively rearmed, and the country has acted as a staging post for the execution of US foreign policy ever since (Swenson-Wright 2005; McCormack 2007; Muto 2013). US basing rights were, however, traded in exchange for an early end to the Occupation, the partial return of sovereignty, and a security guarantee that allowed Japan to focus on economic reconstruction rather than divert scarce resources into military production (Dower 1979). The presence of US bases on Japanese soil implicitly promised the countries of Asia that Japanese imperialism was a thing of the past. Nevertheless, the US-Japan alliance, enshrined in the peace and security treaties, allowed a close association to be drawn between the 'widely accepted fiction' (Samuels: 2003, 211) of formal Japanese pacifism and the reality of participation in the Cold War conflict.

Japan's participation in the Cold War became one of the most divisive issues in its post-war domestic politics. Polling in metropolitan Tokyo during 1960 indicated that a large majority of respondents thought peace should be the most important goal of the nation (Fukui: 1989, 207). Had they known that their Prime Minister, Kishi Nobusuke, had reached a secret agreement with the US allowing the latter to introduce nuclear weapons onto Japanese soil, it is very likely that their response would have been even more emphatic.<sup>26</sup> The revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty in January 1960 and its ratification by Japan's

national Diet later in that year accordingly brought hundreds of thousands of protestors out into the streets (Packard 1966; Gordon: 2014, 273-5).

It was within this broad context that the debate over nuclear power took place.<sup>27</sup> Whilst largely accepting of the prospect of the development of commercial nuclear power, the Japanese public was hostile to nuclear weapons. This hostility increased exponentially after Japan fell victim to its ‘third nuclear attack’ – the *Castle Bravo* test of 1 March 1954 (Akiyama 2003; Yamazaki 2009). The *Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon), a Japanese fishing vessel, was caught in the radioactive fallout and by the time it returned to Japan on 14 March most of the crew were suffering from radiation exposure. As a consequence of this incident, many local governments passed resolutions calling for a ban on all military use of nuclear energy. Both Houses of the national Diet followed suit. Meanwhile, a group of Tokyo housewives started an anti-nuclear weapons petition that received 18 million signatures in only a few months. The national petition that followed garnered around 32 million signatures: more than half of Japan’s registered voters (Hook 1996: 171; Akiyama 2003: 73; Yamazaki 2009: 141). Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Museum and Nagasaki’s International Cultural Hall attracted more than 330,000 visitors between them in 1955, and Hiroshima hosted the First World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. The Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (*Gensuikyo*) was formed in September 1955, and would subsequently become one of Japan’s most important mass movements (Wittner 1997: 9).

Clearly the state had a fight on its hands if it was to pursue its dream of a bright future for Japan fuelled in part by nuclear power. The response, headed by ‘veto players’ (Hyams 2011) like Nakasone Yasuhiro and Shoriki Matsutaro, was to use both traditional channels of influence (money, legislation, administrative structures and bureaucratic guidance) and novel channels to sway Japanese public opinion. Thus Nakasone campaigned constantly in favour of nuclear power, and used his position in various government posts (including as Prime

Minister) to bring this goal to fruition. Similarly, Shoriki used his media empire (the *Yomiuri* newspaper and, later, television) to persuade a skeptical Japanese public just how much better their lives would be in a nuclear future. Nakasone and Shoriki were far from alone. Successive Japanese governments, politicians of the left and right, scientists, and Japanese business and media interests consistently championed the development of a civilian-controlled, commercial nuclear industry (Yanaga 1968: Chapter 7; Samuels 1987: Chapter 6; Hein 1990: 281-4; Hyams 2011).

Lured by visions of future prosperity and a lifestyle of leisure, the Japanese populace began to succumb. The final inducement was the arrival in Japan of the 'Atom's for Peace' exhibition: a US propaganda initiative originally designed to sway its own citizens in favour of nuclear technology. Partly sponsored by Shoriki through the *Yomiuri*, the exhibition toured Japan in 1956 and was a great success. Children admired the artists' impressions of nuclear powered vehicles. Women were captivated by the fashionably dressed exhibition guides, and by the labour-saving potential of the new household devices on display (Zwigenberg 2012). Scientists were bowled over by the application of nuclear power in a wide range of fields. In this way, nuclear power became both a symbol of and a contributor towards Japan's post-war techno-nationalist destiny.

## **Conclusion**

The origins of nuclear power in Japan lie in what Johnson (1982, 24) calls that country's 'situational nationalism': late industrialisation leading to developmentalism where state goals 'invariably derived from comparisons with external reference economies'. The overwhelming goal of the Japanese state has been, and arguably remains, to 'catch up' with the west: to accumulate the trappings of state power and thereby gain recognition and prestige within the



society and hierarchy of states. In pursuing this goal, the Japanese adopted a strategy of techno-nationalism.

The attraction of nuclear power in such circumstances is manifold. In economic terms, nuclear power held out the possibility of freeing Japan from its dependence on imported fossil fuels and providing employment and investment in parts of the country experiencing economic decline. Politically, the development of a highly complex, resource intensive project such as nuclear power fitted perfectly with the goals of techno-nationalism and state-led economic development. Strategically, nuclear power was both a necessary evil as a consequence of the US-Japan alliance and prudent given its function as a recessed deterrent in a hostile, heavily nuclearised regional and global context. Symbolically, nuclear power evidenced Japan's post-war economic recovery and technological prowess, and fostered within the country a sense of equality - of having 'caught up' - with other leading industrial economies. Culturally, nuclear power underpinned narratives of contemporary living and of progress into the future: promising to fuel not only the interests of the state but also the needs and desires of individual consumers.

Despite the structural underpinnings, social agency was necessary to put a nuclear programme in place. Post-war Japan's 'strong state' played a leading role. This was not, however, the strong state envisaged in the standard literature on Japanese politics. It was rather a Gramscian 'integral state': one where state and civil society are co-constituted and indivisible. This indivisibility, as opposed to elite dominance, is what makes the Japanese state 'strong'. Civil society in Japan is not, therefore, as the liberal view would have it, 'weak' relative to the state. Civil society is, nevertheless, susceptible to co-option and coercion, just as the state is susceptible to pressures exerted upon it by those it purports to serve. Japan's infamous 'consensus politics' is the outcome of unending struggle within the 'integral state'.

Armed with this appreciation of Japan as an integral state, we are better able to understand both why Japan adopted nuclear power in the first place and how it was made possible. Japan adopted nuclear power for the reasons already outlined. This adoption was driven by structural imperatives ('late' industrialisation in the context of western imperialism; the Cold War) certainly, but it was made possible above all because it was made *acceptable* to ordinary Japanese people by virtue of the skilful use made of channels of communication linking political society and civil society. These channels were laid down during the Meiji era and either survived into or were re-forged within the post-war period. They continue to operate today (Oguma 2016). Japan's hegemonic class also survived, albeit in truncated form. Using the aforementioned channels of communication, this hegemonic class was able - over a protracted period of time - to persuade large swathes of the populace that commercial nuclear power was the choice best suited to meet their individual needs as consumers and their collective needs as workers and citizens. Equally important, Japan's hegemonic class was able to stifle the cognitive dissonance and political dissent surrounding the country's reliance on the weaponised atom: a reliance so clearly redolent of ongoing subjugation and insecurity.

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1. See also Hein (1990).
  2. On the subject of 'reporters clubs', see Pharr and Krauss (1996).
  3. Aldrich (2008, 15) adopts Pharr's (2003, 316) definition of civil society as 'sustained, organized social activity that occurs in groups that are formed outside the state, the market, and the family'.
  4. Samuels (2013, 18) argues that 'Japan's own vibrant civil society [has] never been more effectual than after 3.11.' This is arguable, but his analysis remains, nevertheless, grounded in the assumption that Japanese civil society is a distinct entity - separate from both business and government.
  5. For a review of alternative - primarily Marxist - accounts, see Barshay (2003a).
  6. For a short survey of the literature, see Tsujinaka and Pekkanen (2007). In her analysis, Carpenter (2012) makes no mention of a role for civil society whatsoever.
  7. Samuels (2013, 118) asserts that "nuclear village" has become 'undoubtedly the most widely embraced metaphor in Japan's post-3.11 discourse.'
  8. See Samuels (2013a) for an extended review of the various narratives that have emerged in public discourse since the triple disaster. Samuels (2013b) provides a shorter review. See also Avenell (2012), Iida (2012), Hamblin (2012), and various contributions to Kingston (2012).
  9. Further suggestions that a 'watershed' moment has arrived in the place and role of civil society in Japan is presented in Pekkanen (2000), Kingston (2004), Avenell (2010), Ogawa (2013), and Mullins and Nakano (2016).
  10. Buttigieg was writing in the context of popular opposition in the United States of America (US) to the launch of the war on Iraq.
  11. Notable exceptions are McCormack (2007), Haddad (2012), and Muto (2013). While each of these scholars consider either a single element (Haddad) or all of the elements considered in this paper (McCormack and Muto), none of them employs the Gramscian framework adopted here.
  12. Limitations on space force me to discuss this final element more briefly than I would like. See Kelly (2013) for a detailed examination.
  13. For a recent discussion see Nakayama (2012).
  14. As famously set out in Karl Marx, preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, reproduced in McLellan (2000, 425). For an introduction to Western Marxism, see New Left Review (1977) and Held (1990).
  15. On Gramsci's life see, amongst others, Joll (1977).
  16. On the influence of Machiavelli in Gramsci's work, see Fontana (1993). More recently, Femia (2005) has criticised 'neo-Gramscian' scholarship on International Relations for overlooking Gramsci's debt to Machiavelli.

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17. There is disagreement in the literature regarding the various (to some observers, contradictory) ways in which Gramsci defines the concept of civil society. See, amongst others, Miliband (1969), Althusser and Balibar (1970), Anderson (1976), Poulantzas (1978), Bobbio (1979), and Urry (1981). For more recent discussions, see Buttigieg (1995), Rehmann (1999), and Thomas (2009).

18. The other three pillars were: powerful interest groups with close links to political parties; a prestigious and powerful bureaucracy; and one-party dominance (Curtis: 1999, 39).

19. Kingston (2004) covers these issues in detail. See also McCormack (1996).

20. In addition to references already cited, see Gluck (1985), Inkster (1988), and Waswo (1996).

21. Perhaps equally important, but certainly drawing less scholarly attention, was the aggressive promotion by the Meiji state at around the turn of the century of a notion of a 'good wife and wise mother'. As Gordon (2014, 111) suggests, women were seen as having an important role in the building of the modern Japanese state: playing a 'quasipublic role as incubator' of the Japanese soldier, as well as carrying out important work in the home and factory. See also Nolte and Hastings (1991), Sand (1998), and Molony and Uno (2008).

Johnson (1982, 20) lists Japan's national goals over the past century and a quarter as: 'increase industrial production', 'rich country, strong military', 'expand productive capacity', 'promote exports', 'full employment', 'high-speed growth', and 'overtake Europe and America'.

22. Albeit the electoral franchise was very limited: it was not until 1925 that men over the age of 25 were given the right to vote.

23. Despite having no formal role under the Constitution, the Meiji Oligarchs (a small group of men who had come to dominate the cabinet and bureaucracy in the 1880s) wielded enormous informal power until their passing in the late 1920s (Silberman 1967).

24. In the following paragraph I draw primarily upon Norman (1973), Beasley (1990) and Gordon (2014).

25. In what follows I again draw primarily upon Norman (1973), Beasley (1990) and Gordon (2014).

26. See Samuels (2003, 233).

<sup>27</sup> I develop these points in greater depth in Kelly (2013), from where the material that follows is chiefly drawn.